HOW TO REQUEST A CODE INTERPRETATION FROM SFM??

The California State Fire Marshal (SFM) is mandated by several statutes to adopt regulations. Building standards adopted by the SFM are found in Title 24 of the California Administrative Code, and non-building standards adopted by the SFM are found in Title 19. The adoption process for both building standards and non-building standards is carried out by the SFM Code Development Division. The SFM has a long history of utilizing public participation and considers it to be a vital part of the adoption process. Regulations adopted by the SFM serve as California's minimum reasonable level of fire and life safety and generally are enforced by the local fire and building officials. Regulations adopted by the SFM are also utilized by design professionals and the various affected industries that serve SFM-regulated industries.

While every effort is made to ensure regulations are written in a manner that will facilitate their use, invariably questions regarding application or intent arise. Whether a question arises from a design professional or an enforcement agency, the SFM, as a proponent of California's fire and life safety program, has the responsibility of providing code interpretations when requested.

> Section 2.05, Title 19, California Code of Regulations, provides that any person may request a code interpretation from the State Fire Marshal relative to the intent of any regulation or provision adopted by him. When the request relates to a specific project, occupancy or building, the State Fire Marshal must review the issue with the appropriate AHJ prior to rendering an interpretation.

You may request a code interpretation from the SFM by following these simple requirements:

1. All requests must be in writing. The request should include a specific contact person's name with address, phone, fax and E-mail information. SFM will NOT accept request submitted by phone.

2. Interpretation request from governmental agencies (including fire departments) must be from the fire chief or fire marshal.

3. Each request must identify the specific code section involved. Please identify the code edition year if applicable (for example, Section 4.08, California Building Code – 1998 ed).

4. If the question involves a specific project, the location must be identified. SFM will contact the AHJ for input prior to issuing a final interpretation.

5. Be as detailed as possible. (While you understand the parameters of you issue, we may not) Identify the occupancy type, construction type, fire protection systems etc. Don't hesitate to include a drawing or plot plan if it helps identify the issue.

6. Request should be mailed, e-mailed or faxed to:

Joe Garcia, Division Chief
Office of the State Fire Marshal
602 E. Huntington Drive, Suite A
Monrovia, CA 91016
FAX – (626) 305-5173
E-mail – joe.Garcia@fire.ca.gov

After SFM staff have reviewed your request and developed and appropriate answer, a DRAFT interpretation will be posted on the SFM web site for a five-day comment period. After the five-day comment period, a written copy of the interpretation will be sent to the contact person who initiated the request. A copy will then be posted in the SFM web site.

Because the time needed for research may vary with each issue, we cannot estimate the time needed to complete each interpretation. However, SFM will attempt to expedite the issuance of Code Interpretations whenever possible.

There is a significant difference between a code interpretation question and a code enforcement question. Code interpretations provide the context and background of specific code sections, whereas a code enforcement question (also known as a code application) provides information regarding the application of the codes to a specific facility or project. Code application questions are directed to the Life Safety Division. Specific questions regarding SFM regulated programs, for example fire extinguishers, fireworks, or building materials listings, should be directed to the specific program staff.

We encourage you to use the links below to access the forms for both code interpretation and code applications and to submit your requests utilizing these forms.

E-Mail Your Code Interpretation Request!

Code Interpretation   Code Application